

THE QUEEN'S HOSTAGE



HARRIET T. COMSTOCK

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*By Harriet T. Comstock, author of "Tower or Throne." With illustrations by Clyde O. DeLand.
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THE reputation as a writer of historical fiction which "Tower or Throne" gave to Mrs. Comstock will be enhanced by her powerful new novel, "The Queen's Hostage," which will strongly appeal to all who love to read a stirring story of love and adventure. Its events take place in the latter part of the reign of Elizabeth. The Earl of Ruthven, who has conspired against the throne, is released from the Tower when his son, Lord Ronald, is made a hostage for his father's loyalty. The child is brought up at Grey Towers, in loneliness, and is considered by his father to be lacking in mind and strength. When the presence of the Queen's hostage is demanded at Court, the Earl substitutes a carefully trained impostor and the rightful heir wanders from his home and under the training of Will Shakespeare and Ben Jonson becomes a famous actor. There are numerous charming and powerful scenes in the story, among them the wayside acting of strolling players, a runaway visit to the Globe Theatre, interviews with the Queen, and a love scene between Ronald and the beautiful heroine of the romance, Lady Sylvia. The story abounds in strong characterizations, in vivid color, high imagination, and picturesque surroundings.

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THE QUEEN'S HOSTAGE



Eliza C. DeLoria 1907

"YOV, HOW·DARE·YOV·COME·
·INTO·MY·PRESENCE?"





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AUTHOR OF "TOWER OR THRONE"

ILLUSTRATED FROM DRAWINGS

BY CLYDE O. DELAND

TORONTO

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1906

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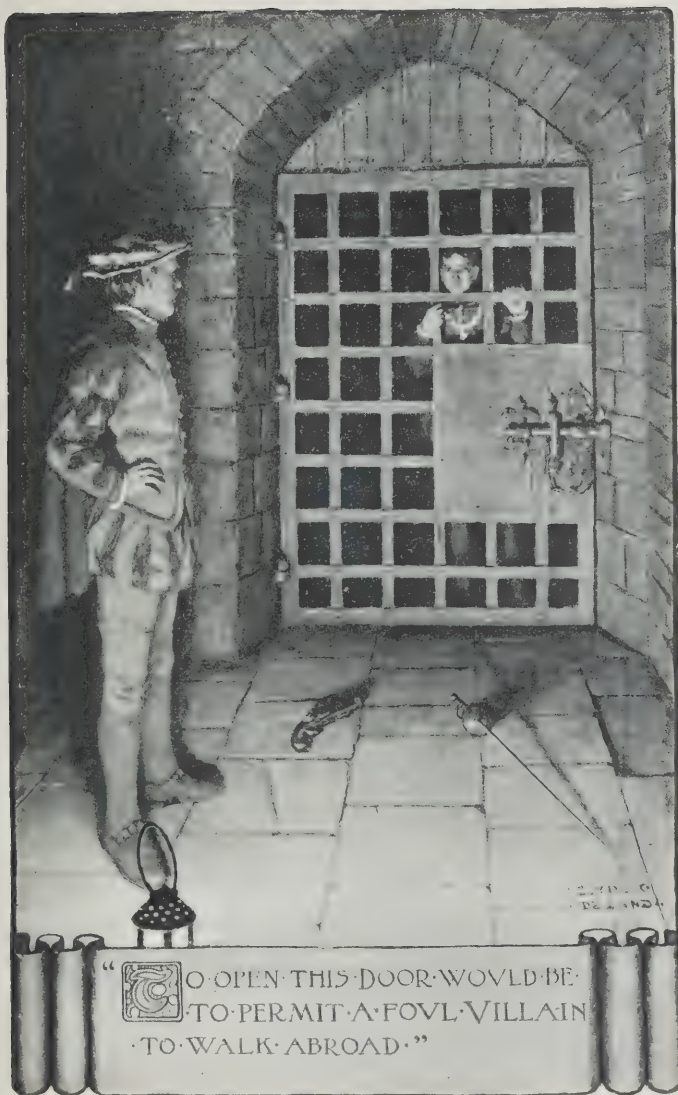
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THE SEEMED TO BE CONVERTED
INTO NAUGHT BVT THE
SENSE OF HEARING



"**L**ADY · SYLVIA, DO · YOV ·
· KNOW · ME ? "



“**T**O OPEN THIS DOOR WOULD BE
TO PERMIT A FOVL VILLAIN
TO WALK ABROAD.”

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CHAPTER I

THE NIGHT LORD RONALD CAME

THE wind came in blasts, and it seemed as if, after all the years, the elements had at last combined to lay the old castle low. Now and again an ominous crash of thunder reverberated among the rocks and gullies in the dell below the castle.

It was an awful night, and to add to the fearsomeness, flashes of blue lightning, almost incessant, showed the ravages the storm was causing. The ivy rustled on the ancient walls during the brief silences in which the wind held its breath before making another assault; and the trees took counsel together, as to whether they should resist, or succumb, to the next attack.

Here and there, from a window of the grim, grey walls, a light flashed; and it was well on toward midnight, too. Usually the castle folk were early to bed, for gaiety held small share in their lives when once they turned from London town, and travellers came

only by appointment to the isolated spot. But to-night a guest was expected—a mighty guest, and there were those in readiness to announce his arrival.

In a great, solemn room, off in the west wing, where only the light of a huge log fire scattered the gloom, four people kept watch and ward, old Nannie, the Scotch nurse, Lady Constance, and her two small sisters, Alice and Margaret.

My Lady Constance was only twelve, but she had a stately dignity, and a cold, proud face that bespoke rare self-possession and character in one so young. She was, however, all a-tremble now. As for Alice and Margaret, they were quite pale and haggard and took no heed to hide their fear. The three sat in a row on a settle by the logs; their fair faces turned ever toward the old nurse as she moved about the room muttering dire predictions and crooning weird ballads whose unlovely tunes were but vehicles for more unlovely themes. The children watched her, wide-eyed and wondering; and they edged closer together as her old, cracked voice broke in the most thrilling moments.

“By my faith!” grumbled the nurse, going to the window and drawing back the heavy drapery, “this night bodes no good to the stranger, whoever he may be! This night means trouble. O-oh!” She dropped the curtain and jumped back as a lurid flash lit up the wild night.

“She saw the Pale Child!” whispered Margaret, who

knew all the legends of the house. Before trouble came the Pale Child, and Nannie could have seen naught less to cause her terror.

“Hush!” murmured Alice, “she’s mumbling. Can you catch the words?” It was much more awful not to catch them! They all listened eagerly.

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“Nannie!”

The old woman turned quickly and looked at the pale girl in affright. She had quite forgotten, in her own anxiety, the group of nurslings.

“Nannie, I will not have you so alarm my—my little sisters! They be half dead with fear; the whole castle has gone mad, belike!”

Fright and anger blended in Constance's tone. It was a new experience for her to be unable to understand what was passing; but she was puzzled now, and she felt the humiliation.

“You should be minding your duties!” she added with lofty coldness.

“The Lord save us!” groaned Nan, “and 'tis His truth ye are speaking, lass, I've clean forgot my duties and my bairns!” She went over to the fire and sank into a huge carved chair.

“'Tis hard on to midnight,” she faltered; “and my lambies still out of their beds. Woe is me! Here you, Margaret, my bonny one, come to my lap, lass. And Alice, your eyes are like uncanny lights, my wean. Here Constance, my maid, run to the nursery beyond, and fetch the nighties. Old Nan grieves for her for-

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Not a child stirred to obey. Fear still held them; Nannie might forget again, and there was safety in numbers and the fire's glow. "Did hear?" asked Nan. Her authority was an established fact in the castle and obedience she demanded as her right.

"We—we are waiting!" Constance made reply, and there was a daring note in her tone.

"Waiting, bairn, and for what?"

"We know not, Nan, but all the castle waits, and—so do we! We heard old Tamus say to John of the Dell when he left for the sheepfold at nightfall, that if *he* came, the turret bell would ring so that all the hamlet would know."

"A long tongue has Tamus," muttered Nan; "he better be doing his duty, if I do say it who has forgotten my own. God help me! And where were you, lass, when ye heard the like of such gabble?"

"In the hall below where Tamus was piling on the wood that John had just brought for the fire."

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Oh! how the iron tongue had clashed and clattered—but not a man had answered to its call! How awful was the master's anger and the mother's grief! Constance grew paler as she recalled the scene. And then the Queen's men had come and taken the Earl, her

father, to London town; and the hated Queen—that Protestant Elizabeth—had shut him up in the grewsome Tower; and there he was now, while they all waited, and the mighty storm held sway!

“What means it all, Nan?” My Lady looked straight at the nurse with her clear grey eyes. She was strangely like her father; and the Earl of Rathven was the only person on earth before whom Nan trembled.

“Best hear when morning comes,” whispered Nan; “’tis no tale for now, and before the bairns.”

“I cannot sleep,” Constance replied; “but Margaret’s eyes are heavy with slumber, she will not heed; as for Alice, what you do not tell she will ferret out.”

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“Aye, aye lass, but curb your temper. This Lord, if haply he come, will be welcomed most of all by my captive master. Strange things happen, and it may chance that this new-comer will turn the key in the Earl’s dreary tower-room. Such deeds have been done.”

"Ah!" rippled Alice, quick of wit, "I see. This Lord, then, is a mighty soldier! He will come with an army and fight the wicked Queen. 'Tis a Lord of Scotland; and he heads an uprising! I have read the like in a recent tale."

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"Wherein lies his power?" asked Constance; and the straight line grew between her eyes. Just so her father looked that night when the countryside had failed him.

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"Aye, in his weakness; for know you this: If from out the night and storm, a Lord of Rathven come, your lady mother will take him up to the Queen, God save her Grace!"—Nan put that in as a possible safety touch which might solace friend or foe—"and offer him as hostage to her Majesty. 'Tis rumored that the Queen be mighty fond of these pledges to her cause. She has opened her prison gates to more than one father when a worthy hostage was forthcoming."

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Nan laughed softly.

"He 'll have small voice in the matter," she chuckled; "his weakness again will prevail."

"Poor young lord!" sighed Margaret.

"Poor!" Constance turned on her younger sister with flashing eyes; "what a baby you are! *Poor*, because he has the power to do this great thing? Why, I would give my soul to set father free! Once at liberty, he could raise an army, or join good Mary of Scots' cause; and then this Protestant Queen,—this—this cruel Elizabeth,—would be ousted, and we could have the old jolly days!" A sob thickened the angry, girlish voice,—“Father Ambrose would dare come over from France again, and the other merry priests with their stories and happy ways! I hate this fear, and hiding; and I hate the Queen who holds my father prisoner!” She stamped angrily.

"Oh! hush thee, lass," moaned Nan in real alarm, for she well knew the castle folk were not all of one mind. While they might serve the Earl of Rathven, they still had opinions of their own.

"There are rooms,—empty rooms in the Tower;" whispered the nurse, "and lasses and lads no older than you, my Lady, have felt the chill of prison walls." Constance's color fled before the warning.

"What is that?" cried Alice, starting up,—“it is a step!”

The four sprang to their feet, and turned an anxious look toward the dark doorway.

Yes, there was a step, many steps! but they all hurried by. Then suddenly above the storm and night, the turret bell rang out! The Lord of Rathven had come!

The bell clanged and clattered. The hurrying steps ran hither and yon, through castle hall and yard. Out in the darkness and tempest a messenger already was riding toward London town with the news.

"He—he has come!" cried Constance, thinking the hoofbeats betokened a comer, not one who departed: "He fears neither night nor storm, this Lord of Rathven!"

"Where did he come from, nurse?" It was Alice who spoke.

"Who knows?" breathed Nan in reply. She was rigidly listening. Had they forgotten her, now the great hour had arrived?

Margaret ran to the doorway, and her small, strained face peered into the outer gloom.

"I hear—" she whispered, "I hear a little baby cry!"

To her, the youngest of the sisters, had the new Lord of Rathven announced his arrival. They all understood at last, and a silence fell among them. Then, old Nan, overlooked in the moment of triumph, dropped upon her knees, and sent a prayer of thankfulness up to God for his mercy. Across the wide hall, in a rich tapestried chamber, the heir of the Rathvens lay wide-

eyed and wailing. Not singly had he come from out the Silence and Mystery; a twin brother had borne him company to the very portal, and then, as if appalled at what he saw, his soul had slipped back into the Unknown, leaving its little comrade to fare alone!

CHAPTER II

MY LADY OF RATHVEN GOES TO COURT

ALL in the splendor of an autumn day, my Lady of Rathven, properly escorted and richly attired, went up to London town with her son in her arms. Little more than a girl did my Lady look for all she was the mother of three tall maids and this sleeping son. She was fair and gentle, and trembled at the thought of appearing before the great Queen with her plea and offering.

She had been well drilled in her part by a priest from France who was even now in hiding at Grey Towers awaiting her Ladyship's return from the interview. "Daughter," the soothing father had explained, "thy part is simple. Empty promises her Majesty will have none of, and the Earl, thy husband, is in ill favor. But list thee! If he so regrets his past apparent disloyalty to her Highness, that he is willing, not only to offer future allegiance, but his son as hostage for his promise, what more can her Grace desire? And time—time, my daughter, can work wonders." So my Lady travelled away, and, as she went, over and again, she repeated her part, and, looking down upon the small hostage, trembled fearsomely.

But upon the day set for the audience with the Queen strength came to her, and very proudly she entered the little antechamber, she and her son.

Elizabeth sat in a deep cushioned chair and was attended by but three of her household. She glanced quickly at my Lady of Rathven as she entered; then dropped her eyes. She remembered her Ladyship perfectly, although it had been years since she had graced the court, owing to the Earl of Rathven's tendencies to get into trouble.

"Your Majesty"—Lady Rathven knelt with her baby held close—"and if it please your Grace, may the humblest subject of the realm speak with her Queen—alone?"

"Aye," smiled Elizabeth, motioning her attendants to retire; "surely so small a favor is easy to grant. Rise my Lady Rathven, you bear a burden."

"No, your Majesty, I bear a gift for your Highness."

Elizabeth, from the safety of her glory and power, could afford to smile genially; and this she did, leaning forward, almost childishly, in apparent eagerness.

"A gift, and for me?" she said, "'tis a new source from which to expect a gift. The house of Rathven has not been over generous to its Queen."

My lady uncovered the little sleeping face and the two gazed upon it in silence. Then softly: "Your Majesty, the King your father oft took hostage: and to offer hostage I have sought your court to-day."

Elizabeth never raised her eyes from the baby face, but she said:

"I pray you proceed."

"My husband, the Earl of Rathven and Grey Towers—"

"Once Earl," the Queen corrected, "go on!"

"Once Earl"—my Lady flushed scarlet—"has *appeared* grievously to offend your Majesty. In the recent Catholic uprising, he was unfortunately made use of by those deeper-dyed than he."

The Queen moved her beautiful hands impatiently. "His Earlship's color was a deep scarlet," she laughingly said, "a shade or two darker, and 'twould be difficult to tell it from black. But he repents, I suppose? The Earl has so often repented! As God lives, the Tower is a rare hothouse for forcing the bloom of repentance." Lady Rathven found it bitter hard to bear the Queen's scorn but the priest had prepared her for this.

"Mere promises from my husband," she went on, "would but little avail, your Highness; that I know full well. But should you open the doors of his prison house"—there was a pause—"and give again to him his titles and lands, he will swear not merely allegiance to your Majesty, but he will consecrate this, his only son, to your sacred cause and be prepared, at any moment, to give the young heir of Rathven into your Grace's custody."

“Bring the child nearer!” commanded the Queen; “I would examine this proposed hostage of mine.”

Resting on the cushion at the Queen’s feet, my Lady of Rathven held up the still sleeping baby.

Elizabeth’s eyes grew tender. Never did her gaze rest upon a child but her heart softened and her lips curved.

“As memory serves me,” she whispered, touching, almost reverently, the tiny head, “the Rathvens are big and ruddy. Strong are they to fight for the cause they espouse, likely warriors all and worthy a monarch’s notice. This little lad may hold the promise of his race, but he cunningly hides it in his weakness. Suppose, now, I pardon the offences of your husband, and this little lad’s father, suppose I give back your lands and titles, think you I shall not exact my pay? I am, I trust, a just queen, but I show justice to myself as well. If I make others rich at my own expense, ’tis the surest way to make myself a beggar. A good bargain must be kept by both sides. If I perform my part, I shall hold you to yours. Plain speaking is my manner. I trust not the Earl of Rathven! I like not his companions or his ways. If I set him free, it will be in no sense because I put faith in his repentance. The Earl must bide near court, where my eye can be upon him, and my heart rejoice in his renewed allegiance. I will not have him fleeing to his eyrie nest of Grey Towers. The place has not a savory reputation as a good loyal

house. The freedom of the court—or near it—must suffice for the Rathvens. And”—again that reverent touch upon the baby head—“should the Earl of Rathven fail me, I shall then claim my hostage. I shall do with him as occasion and my will prompt; and no longer shall the Earl’s eyes, or yours, rest upon the lad!”

My lady trembled, but she spoke no word.

“I do then command you, Lady Rathven, to bear this answer to your husband. Train well the child in mind and body until such time as I shall summon him to court and to the place I shall prepare for him. I shall expect a worthy courtier, I warn you. I am keenly alive to the manner of youth that represents England’s glory. Heed closely, my Lady Rathven! And now, until we meet again, in the language the Earl likes so well—adieu.”

Thus my lady gained her point. The family at Grey Towers hurried to the Queen’s city. The prison gates fell back to let the Earl pass out into the freedom of day. He bore in his heart a great hatred for the power that now had a new strength over him, but he had been in no position to parley with chances for escape. Better men than he, who had borne part in the recent uprising, were still languishing in the Tower; so the Earl smothered his wrath and practised the art of smiling, while he basked in the apparent favor of the Queen.

But it was as impossible for the Earl of Rathven to be loyal in heart as it had ever been, and there were

knew all the legends of the house. Before trouble came the Pale Child, and Nannie could have seen naught less to cause her terror.

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Margaret ran to the doorway, and her small, strained face peered into the outer gloom.

"I hear—" she whispered, "I hear a little baby cry!"

To her, the youngest of the sisters, had the new Lord of Rathven announced his arrival. They all understood at last, and a silence fell among them. Then, old Nan, overlooked in the moment of triumph, dropped upon her knees, and sent a prayer of thankfulness up to God for his mercy. Across the wide hall, in a rich tapestried chamber, the heir of the Rathyens lay wide-

eyed and wailing. Not singly had he come from out the Silence and Mystery; a twin brother had borne him company to the very portal, and then, as if appalled at what he saw, his soul had slipped back into the Unknown, leaving its little comrade to fare alone!

CHAPTER II

MY LADY OF RATHVEN GOES TO COURT

ALL in the splendor of an autumn day, my Lady of Rathven, properly escorted and richly attired, went up to London town with her son in her arms. Little more than a girl did my Lady look for all she was the mother of three tall maids and this sleeping son. She was fair and gentle, and trembled at the thought of appearing before the great Queen with her plea and offering.

She had been well drilled in her part by a priest from France who was even now in hiding at Grey Towers awaiting her Ladyship's return from the interview. "Daughter," the soothing father had explained, "thy part is simple. Empty promises her Majesty will have none of, and the Earl, thy husband, is in ill favor. But list thee! If he so regrets his past apparent disloyalty to her Highness, that he is willing, not only to offer future allegiance, but his son as hostage for his promise, what more can her Grace desire? And time—time, my daughter, can work wonders." So my Lady travelled away, and, as she went, over and again, she repeated her part, and, looking down upon the small hostage, trembled fearsomely.

But upon the day set for the audience with the Queen strength came to her, and very proudly she entered the little antechamber, she and her son.

Elizabeth sat in a deep cushioned chair and was attended by but three of her household. She glanced quickly at my Lady of Rathven as she entered; then dropped her eyes. She remembered her Ladyship perfectly, although it had been years since she had graced the court, owing to the Earl of Rathven's tendencies to get into trouble.

"Your Majesty"—Lady Rathven knelt with her baby held close—"and if it please your Grace, may the humblest subject of the realm speak with her Queen—alone?"

"Aye," smiled Elizabeth, motioning her attendants to retire; "surely so small a favor is easy to grant. Rise my Lady Rathven, you bear a burden."

"No, your Majesty, I bear a gift for your Highness."

Elizabeth, from the safety of her glory and power, could afford to smile genially; and this she did, leaning forward, almost childishly, in apparent eagerness.

"A gift, and for me?" she said, "'tis a new source from which to expect a gift. The house of Rathven has not been over generous to its Queen."

My lady uncovered the little sleeping face and the two gazed upon it in silence. Then softly: "Your Majesty, the King your father oft took hostage: and to offer hostage I have sought your court to-day."

Elizabeth never raised her eyes from the baby face, but she said:

"I pray you proceed."

"My husband, the Earl of Rathven and Grey Towers—"

"Once Earl," the Queen corrected, "go on!"

"Once Earl"—my Lady flushed scarlet—"has *appeared* grievously to offend your Majesty. In the recent Catholic uprising, he was unfortunately made use of by those deeper-dyed than he."

The Queen moved her beautiful hands impatiently. "His Earlship's color was a deep scarlet," she laughingly said, "a shade or two darker, and 'twould be difficult to tell it from black. But he repents, I suppose? The Earl has so often repented! As God lives, the Tower is a rare hothouse for forcing the bloom of repentance." Lady Rathven found it bitter hard to bear the Queen's scorn but the priest had prepared her for this.

"Mere promises from my husband," she went on, "would but little avail, your Highness; that I know full well. But should you open the doors of his prison house"—there was a pause—"and give again to him his titles and lands, he will swear not merely allegiance to your Majesty, but he will consecrate this, his only son, to your sacred cause and be prepared, at any moment, to give the young heir of Rathven into your Grace's custody."

Queen Mary at 16
Richmond Lodge
Signed Mary.

If each man in a measure
Would play a brother's part
And send a ray of sunshine
To a brother's part.
How changed would be our country
How changed would be our poor
And then right Merry England
Deserve the name she bore.

Mary.

Content.

A blazing fire on a winter's
night,
A cosy chair, and all seems
right,
The storm fiend howls, the
heavens divide,
But rude discomfort I divide;
My pipe aglow, true peace
I know,
Until at last to rest I go;
Yet ere I seek my peaceful
bed,
From cover to cover I read
my "Red".
N.H.

The Song The Needle Singe.

Knit and purl, knit and purl,
All the livelong day;
This is what the needles sing
To the yarn of gray;
Purl and knit, knit and knit,
As the garments grow;
Everyone must do her bit
For the cause you know.

In countless homes the sound is heard -
The song the needles sing -
As day by day the women lay
Their bit, an offering;
Old fingers gnarled and rough
with toil;
Young fingers, white and slim -
Each does her share with equal care
Because it is for him.

One country heart at home to-day
Throb to the needle's song;
As far away the ships of gray
Sail silently along.
Old hearts, grown wise with
many years,
Young hearts, unused to pain,
Will pray alone - each for
her own:
"God send him back again".

By Clara Griffith Gaggam.

Lost In Transit

Imported jokes I seldom read,
For it appears to me,
That jokes are too far fetched indeed,
When fetched across the sea.

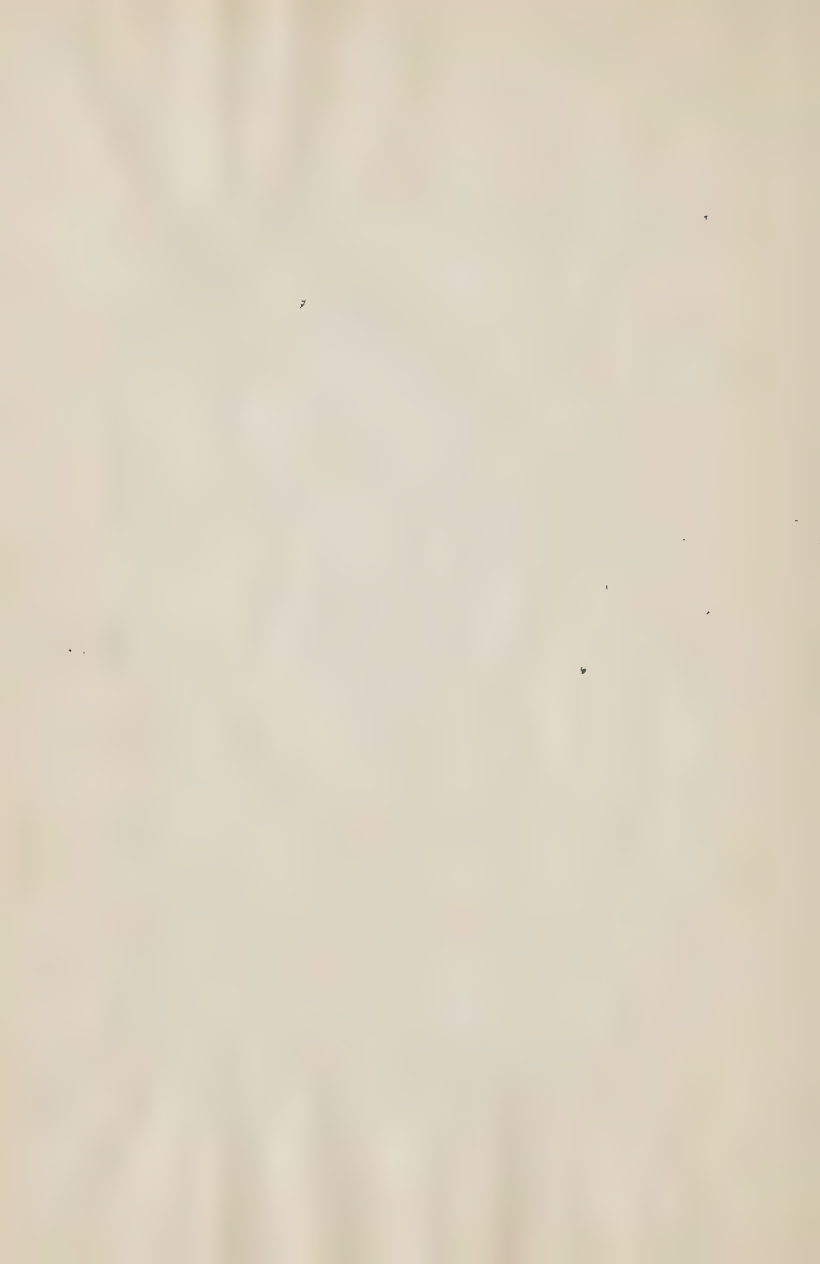
They seem to lose their pristine ring,
To fall way under bar,
The common cost of carrying,
A pleasantry too far.

I find them very tasteless lunch-
I, ultimate consumer -
As Gallic humor lacks the punch
And English Punch the humor.

Among Teutonic comic screams,
Though all are thrice accursed
The dog-and-sausage motif seems,
To be about the worst.

But let us not accuse of fault
The overocean antic:
Perhaps his humor loses salt
In crossing the Atlantic

By W.C. Kuona.





The Voyage.

It was sometime in the late spring,

But oftener in the fall,

When the Gypsy blood woke in you,

And I would hear you call,

"Oh, put your hand in mine, dear,

And come along with me;

It's a fair world, a rare world.

With 'much for us to see.'

Oh, how you loved the old ships

From topmasts to the hulls!

And how you loved the new harbors,

And salt winds and the gulls!

I never hear one crying,

I never smelt the fire!

But I can feel that your hand

Is reaching out for mine.

You sailed one night in Maytime,
All secretly alone;
You went to some new harbor
We two had never known,
I called you through the darkness,
But the wind was from the sea
My sad cries, my mad cries
Were all blown back to me.

But sometime in the late spring
Or maybe in the fall
Your ship will be returning
And I shall hear you call
"Oh, put your hand in mine, dear,
And come along with me,
To a rare world, a fair world,
Across an astral sea."

Discovery Of
A Nitro-Glycerine
Manufactory in Birmingham

No doubt you have heard the news of
Whitehead's daring plan.

Nitro-glycerine he did make to destroy
his fellow men;

They say he is a "Yankin", if you go
by his tone,

He can figure very well, he knows
his "little book".

Mr. Whitehead's Tricks have got him
in a fix

For working what is called an infernal
machine,

And all the people say it was a lucky
day.

When Sergeant Price caught him making
nitro-glycerine.

In Ed'sam Street he took a shop
to carry on his trade,

But the most wonderful blue was on
this roving blade.

They watched his shop by day and
night, they combed his hair,
So their surprise, you met their eyes,
niter again.

The shop is open they did say, open
a rummy go!

They pop'd the "do-bies" on him quick
such a habit men you know.

Now the black he ~~was~~ there, and
Sergeant Price as well.

Thus marched his Whitehead of to jail
and pop'd him in a cell.

Take my word he knew the plan to
use the baint and brush.

As slow the Town Hall inside sat, and
all our time to watch.

But Sergeant Price he smelt his game,
or rather he smelt them.

He was lodging at home, while someone
there was two.

To destroy this niter planing they
sailed in the Lill.

It put a puzzle on them all, it was



to them a pill;

They telegraphed to Glasgow town, a
Scotchman soon was here,
He may have lunched or near
a cheese and butter all of his
own to let they did go in
conducing goods & cart.

In buckets put this glycerine, the
Scotchman knew the art.
He soon was down upon his knees
"I'll show you how it's done"
He said the policemen, that wait do,
& off the lobbies run.
So to finish off my song, the truth
I'm telling you,
Give honour to the policeman, & give
& honour too,
Should you ever find in life, a trade
with lots of tin
Have a manufacture, boys, never -
glycerine.

Joan de Belleville

By ARTHUR QUINTERMAN

THEY brought her word that her lord
was dead.

Through the forest that he had come
He had died, and the word was true
A woman's heart in the heart of a king

"Then gather with battle or sword's lance
And ride for the love of your king
I will be with you in the day of your need
I will be with you in the day of your need"

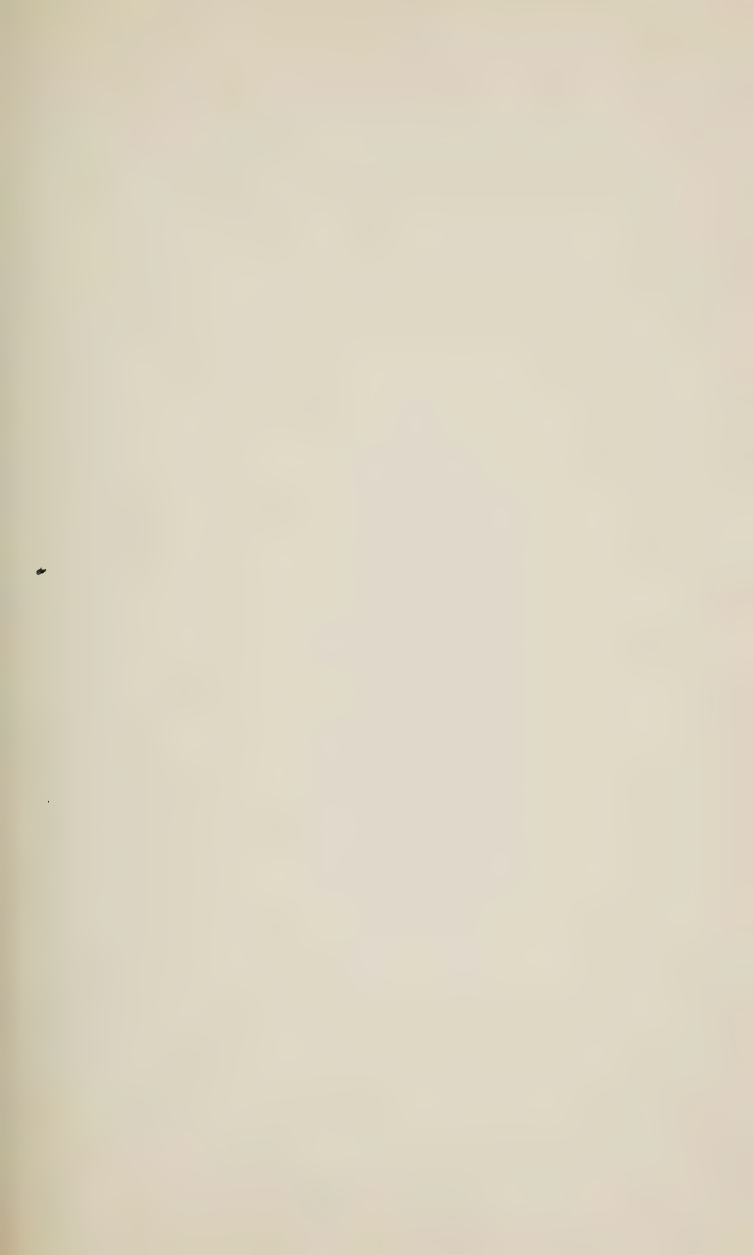
They fell and he lay with his head of stone
And light in the saddle & his hand
He who was a king with his hand
He who was a king with his hand

She came in the grey of the dawn
All about her dead in the night
And she was the only one who
That had been the love of the king

And she was the only one who
That had been the love of the king
And she was the only one who
That had been the love of the king







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